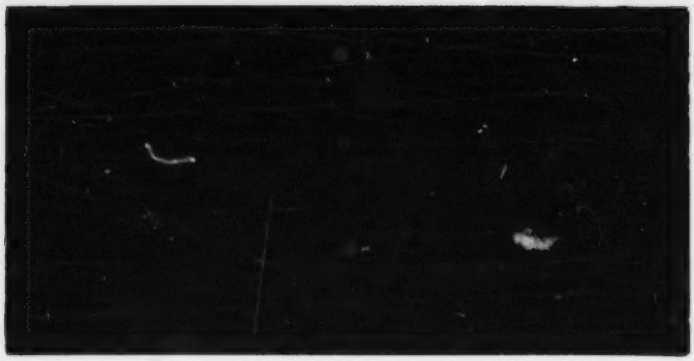

SOCIAL PLANNING and RESEARCH COUNCIL
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FINAL EVALUATION OF OPERATION EMPLOYABILITY

December 1989

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Operation Employability was designed to enhance the employability of physically and/or mentally disabled students between the ages of 16 and 21 who were able to participate in a supported work program for at least three years. All three Boards of Education in the Regional Municipality of Hamilton-Wentworth agreed to participate in the project - Board of Education for the City of Hamilton, the Hamilton-Wentworth Roman Catholic Separate School Board and the Wentworth County Board of Education.

The three year project was sponsored by the Industry-Education Council of Hamilton-Wentworth and funded by the Canada Employment and Immigration (Innovations); the Secretary of State; the Ontario Ministries of Community and Social Services, Labour, and Education; the Regional Municipality of Hamilton-Wentworth and various community organizations.

An independent evaluation of the project was conducted by the Social Planning and Research Council of Hamilton and District.

Employers were recruited through a variety of mechanisms to provide work experience opportunities for disabled students who were selected by selection committees within each Board of Education. The project was not designed to help students obtain paid employment after graduation, but to develop their skills in two main areas: job maintenance and job functioning. "Job maintenance" skills refer to those attributes which should help an individual retain employment (i.e., punctuality, co-operation and the ability to follow directions). "Job functioning" skills include those activities which are necessary to complete the specific tasks required by a position.

During the first year of the project, on-the-job support was provided by the Project Coordinator. During years two and three, each Board hired a Job Coach who was responsible for providing this function. Each Job Coach was supervised by a liaison staff person within each Board of Education and the overall project was managed by a Steering Committee which was recruited by the

Industry-Education Council. At the outset of the project, a Community Network Group was formed, composed of representatives of a number of community agencies to provide advice to the Project Coordinator.

The evaluation was based upon interviews with 135 of 180 participants - employers, parents, educators, Steering Committee members, Community Network Group members, students and Job Coaches.

Interviewee Categories	Interviewer	Total Number of Interviewees	Responding Number of Interviewees	Responding Percent of Interviewees	Interviewing Style
1.Employers	Researcher	44	29	66.0	Telephone
2.Parents	Researcher	55	37	67.5	Telephone
3.Educators	Researcher	15	15	100.0	Telephone
4.Steering Committee	Researcher	17	13	76.5	Telephone & Personal
5.Community Network Group	Researcher	15	13	86.7	Telephone
6.Students	Job Coach	31	25	81.0	Personal
7.Job Coaches	Researcher	3	3	100.0	Personal
Total		180	135		

During the three year project, a total of 39 students were involved in a total of 73 placements. Eight of the 39 students (21%) did not complete their placements. In four cases non-completion was due to the student entering a regular co-op education program. Only two students did not complete their placement due to "adjustment difficulties".

Of the remaining 31 students who completed their placements, 22 were diagnosed as developmentally handicapped, five as physically handicapped and two were both physically and developmentally handicapped. Two students' diagnostive reports were incomplete. Forty-eight percent of the 31 students (n=15) had a reading level of less than grade 3 and 74% (n=23) were aged to 16 to 18. Approximately two-thirds were male (n=21).

The evaluation showed that the program developed as a result of strong commitments, on the part of all of the participants to the goal of enhancing the employability of handicapped students. Recruitment was based upon a "soft-sell" approach and very few participants required "convincing" to become involved.

During the first year, there was some confusion among some of the parents about the goals of the program but this confusion was resolved in year two.

Only seventeen percent of the employers reported that they had been motivated to become involved in the program because of perceived benefits to their business. Although all of the employers were willing to continue their participation in the program, the primary motivation for continuation was based upon benefits to the student rather than benefits to the employer. The project required a significant investment of employer time although only a few employers reported this as a source of concern. Sixty-five percent of the employers, for example, spent more than 11 hours per month on program activity.

Over 90% of the participants in each group reported that their expectations had been fulfilled by the program. There was a general consensus among all of the participants that the students' employability had increased through the development of both job-related and social skills.

An analysis of the student responses suggested that the program appeared most likely to succeed with students who indicated that they wanted to work after finishing school. The students who did not possess career interests were least likely to report satisfaction with their placements.

A significant proportion of the participant groups were pessimistic about the willingness of local employers to hire the handicapped - primarily because of a lack of exposure among employers to handicapped persons. This pessimism was true of 52% of the employers, 40% of parents, 20 % of the educators, 58% of the Steering Committee and 77% of the Community Network Group.

It was noteworthy that only 41% of the participating employers reported that they would be willing to hire this student for whom they had provided a work placement. In some cases, this was due to the fact that they had created a "special job" for the student but, most frequently their unwillingness was due to the additional training and extra supervisory time that would be required.

Given the degree of pessimism among the participants related to the future employability of these students, a follow-up evaluation will be required for the purpose of monitoring the future employment experience of the student. If these students are unable to secure employment there was some concern expressed among a few participants that the program might do more harm than good by raising the expectations of both the students and the parents and then frustrating these elevated expectations because of an inability or unwillingness by employers to hire the students.

An analysis of the portability of the program suggested that it could be implemented in other communities without requiring significant revisions.

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INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this report is to present the results of a final evaluation of the "Operation Employability" project - a work experience program for handicapped students which operates within three Boards of Education in the Regional Municipality of Hamilton-Wentworth. This three year program was initiated by the Industry-Education Council and funded, as a pilot project, by Employment and Immigration Canada (Innovations); Secretary of State Canada;, the Ontario Ministries of Community and Social Services, Education, and Labour; the Regional Municipality of Hamilton-Wentworth and various community organizations*. The program has now received ongoing funding from the three participating Boards of Education and its phase as a pilot project has been completed.

An independent evaluation was carried out by the Social Planning and Research Council during each year of the three year pilot phase. This report presents the results of the final year and makes reference to the evaluation reports which were generated at the end of years one and two.

The reports pertaining to the previous evaluations are available from the Social Planning and Research Council.

* Hamilton and District Society for Disabled Children
The Hamilton Foundation
Junior League of Hamilton and Burlington
Rotary and Kiwanis Clubs
Hamilton and District Association for the Mentally Retarded
Amity Goodwill Industries

PART 1: BACKGROUND

1.1 PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

In 1984, Chedoke-McMaster Hospitals Child and Family Centre conducted a study on disabled young people in response to a growing realization that there was very little happening in regards to the employment preparation of the handicapped adolescent. The study found that of the 600 handicapped adolescents between the ages of 13 and 20 in the 3 Boards of Education, few had interpersonal or work related skills (Bennett 1985). As a result, most went on a disability pension or entered a sheltered workshop after the age of eighteen.

In 1985, the Industry-Education Council (I.E.C.) of Hamilton-Wentworth adopted a proposal to develop a pilot project that offered integrated work experience opportunities to disabled youth. Ken Bennett, the researcher and author of the 1985 Chedoke-McMaster study, agreed to coordinate the 36 month pilot project. Primary funding to implement the program came from a $195,000 Federal Innovations Grant and $60,000 from the Province and Region with in-kind contributions of $160,000.

Operation Employability is designed to enhance the employability of physically and/or mentally disabled students between the ages of 16 and 21 who will be able to participate in the supported work program for at least three years. All three Boards of Education in the Regional Municipality of Hamilton-Wentworth agreed to participate - Board of Education for the City of Hamilton, Hamilton-Wentworth Roman Catholic Separate School Board and the Wentworth County Board of Education.

Although all disabled students are eligible, a selection committee in each Board of Education was formed to choose only those students who could most benefit from Operation Employability's program. Operation Employability was not designed to help these students obtain paid employment after graduation, but to develop their skills in two main areas: job maintenance and job functioning. Job maintenance skills are those which would help an individual retain employment e.g., punctuality, cooperation and following instructions, whereas the skill areas related to job functioning included those activities which are needed to complete the specific tasks of a given position. For example, in a

cafeteria such skills could be wiping tables, or washing dishes.

The Social Planning and Research Council of Hamilton and District (SPRC) was contracted by the Industry-Education Council to act as an independent evaluator of Operation Employability during its three year implementation.

As Diagrams 1 - 3 indicate, the functions and relationships of various participating parties in Operation Employability have altered throughout its 36 month time frame. It should be clarified that the directional lines in these diagrams do not indicate communication boundaries but only some key directional links from an administrative perspective. The following paragraphs will briefly outline these roles of various Operation Employability participants. Following this, a brief outline of interaction patterns over the three year period will be outlined.

Industry-Education Council (I.E.C.)

The Industry-Education Council acted as an administrative coordinating body for Operation Employability's implementation.

Steering Committee

The Steering Committee was made up of individuals selected and approached by the I.E.C. who possessed the skills to positively influence administrative aspects of Operation Employability.

Community Network Group

Individuals were selected by the I.E.C. and Steering Committee to represent areas of the community which were needed to facilitate the development of Operation Employability. Members were to act as an advisory resource and assist in the development and implementation of the program.

Boards of Education Liaisons

Three individuals representing the Catholic, Hamilton and Wentworth school boards acted as Liaisons between the I.E.C., where Operation Employability was administered, and the various schools, where it was implemented. In the second year, these representatives supervised the implementation of Operation

Employability through the Job Coaches. By the third year their work responsibilities had increased to assume much of the administration within each Board as well as implementation supervision. These individuals were members of the Steering Committee.

Project Coordinator

This individual originally coordinated both the administration of Operation Employability and its implementation with the students. Over the program's three years, this role became increasing distanced from the program's administration and implementation as other parties took greater ownership.

Employers

Employers who participated were ones who agreed to give students access to their businesses as a place to gain work experience and skills. They also donated a level of supervision to the students.

Educators

Educators are the students' teachers within the schools. They acted as a resource for those working directly with students on placements and reinforced concepts learned while at work.

Parents

Parents of the students often reinforced concepts and skills learned at placements as well as sometimes providing transportation to the placement site.

Students

Students were selected from physically and/or mentally handicapped students from the age of 16 who would be able to participate in the program for a minimum of three years. From this criteria, students who were thought to have the potential to gain maximum value from the program were chosen.

Job Coaches

Job Coaches were employed during Operation Employability's second year. They helped to decide which placements would suit students' needs best, approached employers and made placement arrangements. These individuals also

provided on-site supervision and training to students while on placement.

INTERACTION PATTERNS OVER THREE YEARS

Year 1

In year one, the Project Coordinator was responsible for both the administrative and implementation aspects of Operation Employability. The Community Network Group only met on one occasion. It was decided at this meeting that members would obtain information on Operation Employability from the Project Coordinator and/or Committees' Chairs to which they belonged. As will become evident throughout this report, this implementation method did not facilitate the fulfilment of the original purposes of the Community Network Group. The S.P.R.C.'s evaluation for year one found that the administrative and implementation duties of the Project Coordinator were excessive. This observation was a key catalyst to changes in year two.

Year 2

The primary change in year two involved the hiring of one Job Coach for each Board of Education. The Job Coaches were responsible for direct implementation work with the students. In response to these new positions, the Board Liaisons began to take on supervisory authority over the Job Coaches. In summary, year two was a year of transition as the Project Coordinator's role focused upon administration while the Boards of Education adopted increased responsibility for implementation.

Year 3

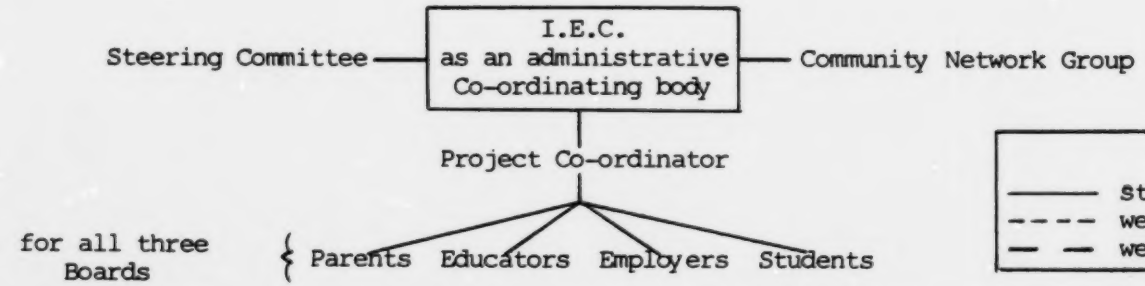
The challenge of year three involved the complete assumption of ownership by the Boards of Education before the project ended. The question of ownership depended, to a large degree, upon the availability of funds. By the end of June 1989, all three Boards had obtained funding for the continuation of the work experience program, including funding for the position of Job Coach. However, as will be discussed later, the terms of ownership and hiring were different between the Boards.

As the ownership transition was occurring in year 3, administration became progressively less centralized at the I.E.C. and increasingly independent within each Board. As a result, by the end of year 3, both the administration and implementation of Operation Employability was essentially removed from the I.E.C. and the Steering Committee and was functioning independently within each Board. At that point, the Steering Committee was formally disbanded.

ADMINISTRATIVE DIRECTIONAL LINKS FOR OPERATION EMPLOYABILITY

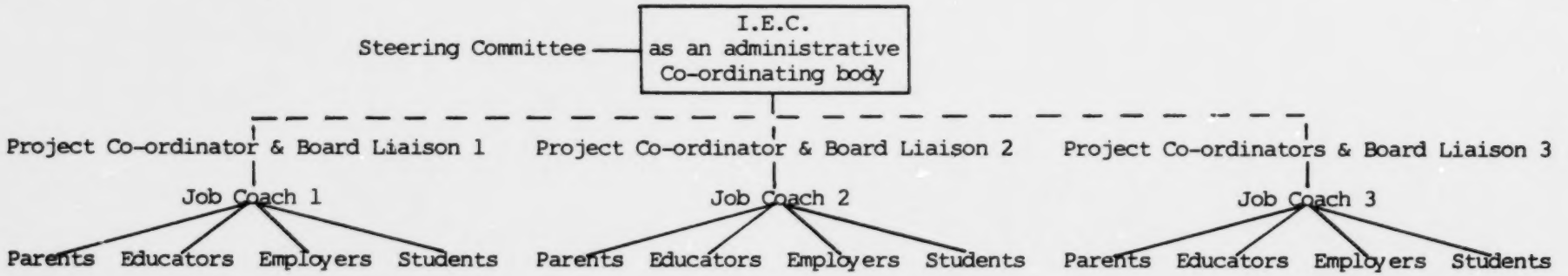
YEAR 1

DIAGRAM 1



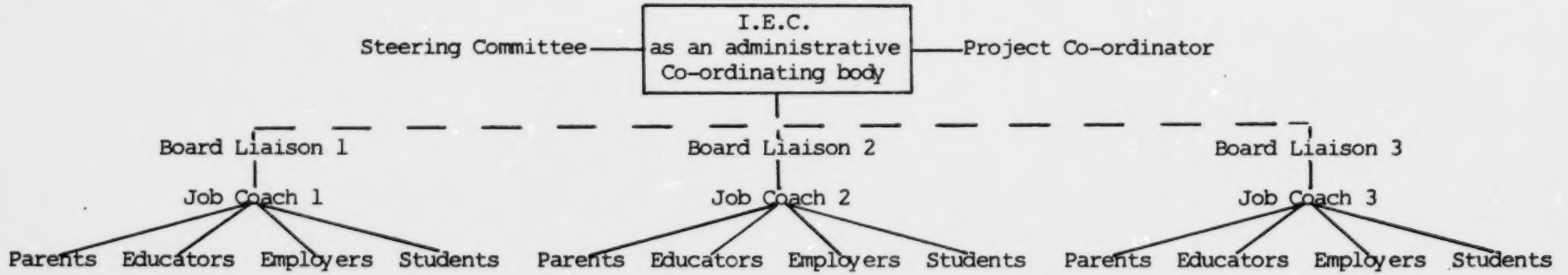
YEAR 2

DIAGRAM 2



YEAR 3

DIAGRAM 3



1.2 PURPOSE OF THE EVALUATION

The evaluative design contained three primary components, each of which was structured to address specific questions and issues.

a) Process Evaluation

This component was designed to monitor the way in which the program was implemented. Information was gathered for the purpose of responding to a number of key questions.

1. What are the important considerations in implementing the program?
2. To what extent did the actual implementation reflect the initial program plans?
3. What lessons can be learned from the Hamilton-Wentworth experience for implementation in other communities?

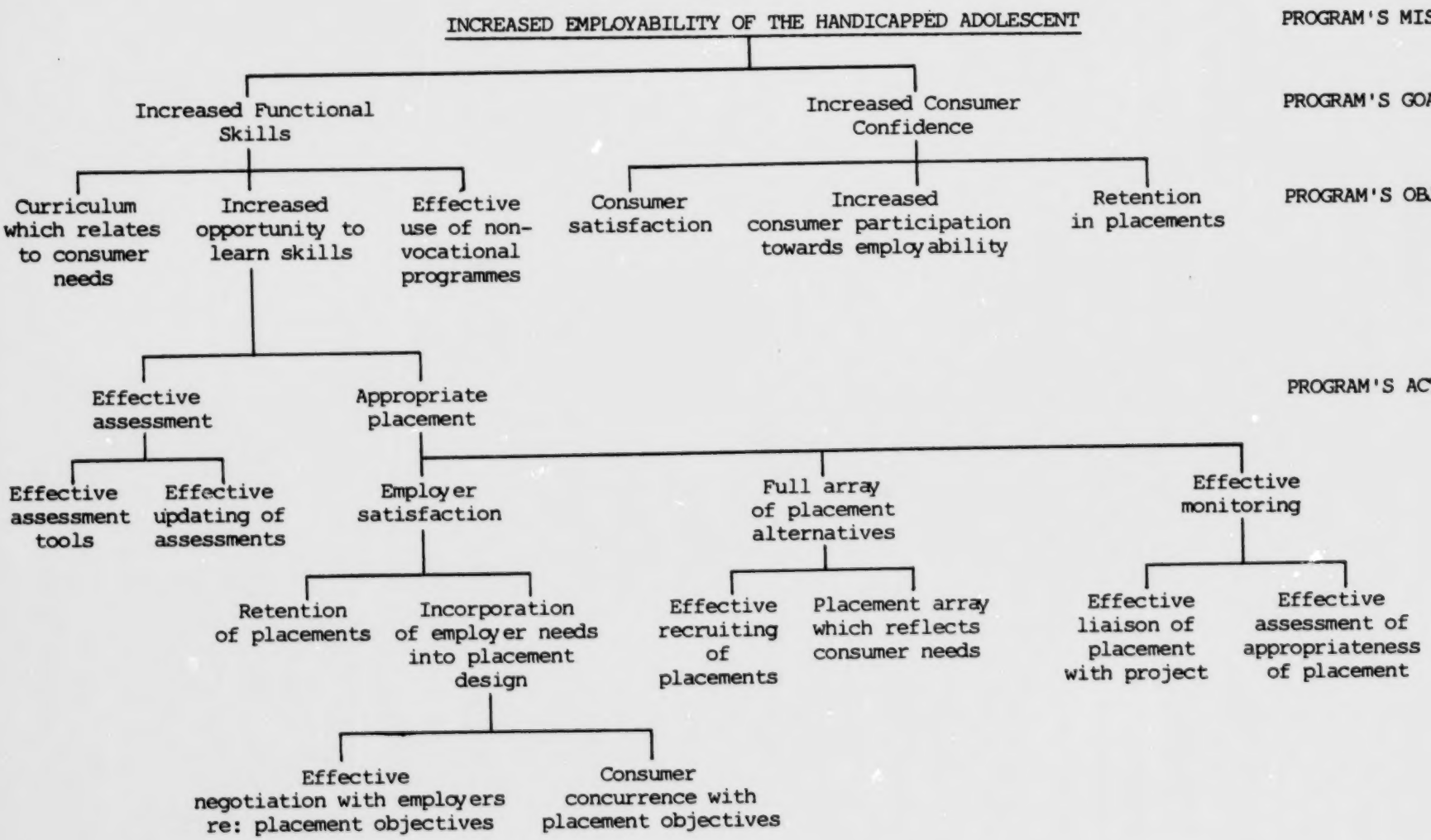
b) Outcome Evaluation

This component was designed to analyze the actual achievements of the program, relative to the goals which had been established at the outset. This component required a detailed analysis of the potential program outcomes - the results of which are presented in Figure 1.

Information was gathered, in this component, to address the following key issues.

1. What were the expectations of the participants and were these expectations consistent with program goals?
2. To what extent were the participants' expectations met by the program?
3. To what extent were the participant groups satisfied with the work experience placements?
4. To what extent did the students develop new skills during the placement period?
5. To what extent was the students' employability enhanced by their placement experiences?

FIGURE 1: PROPOSED PROGRAM OUTCOMES



Source: SPRC/I.E.C. Working Agreement Contract

c) Portability Analysis

The component involved an analysis of the "generalizability" of the local experience to other communities. The key questions addressed by this component were:

1. To what extent could a similar program be implemented in other communities?
2. How can other communities maximize the probability of success with this program, based upon lessons learned from the Hamilton-Wentworth experience?

This report presents the results of this evaluation in three parts:

Part I: Process and Administration
Part II: Expectations
Part III: Outcomes
Part IV: Portability

The conclusion section specifically relates these results to the issues identified above.

It is important to note that, at the time of this evaluation, none of the participating students had completed secondary school. As a result, the actual employment experience of the students, subsequent to finishing school, cannot be analyzed. This issue will be addressed in follow-up studies which will be conducted in the future.

Consequently, the results pertaining to the participants' employability is based upon the perceptions of the various participant groups. These perceptions have not yet been "put to the test" of the actual post-secondary school experience of these students.

1.3 METHODOLOGY

To assess the effectiveness of the program, from the perspective of all of the participants, the entire population of participants (n=180) were invited to participate in an interview process. A standardized questionnaire was developed (Appendix A) and most interviews were completed by telephone and involved 30 to 45 minutes per interview. In total 135 interviews were completed for a response rate of 75%. Figure 2 presents the number of completions and other relevant data for each participant category.

As a result of requirements from the participating Boards of Education, the student interviews were carried out by the Job Coaches. All other interviews were completed by the project researchers.

The results were analyzed using the SPSS PC+ software package.

FIGURE 2

Interviewee Categories	Interviewer	Total Number of Interviewees	Responding Number of Interviewees	Responding Percent of Interviewees	Interviewing Style
1.Employers	Researcher	44	29	66.0	Telephone
2.Parents	Researcher	55	37	67.5	Telephone
3.Educators	Researcher	15	15	100.0	Telephone
4.Steering Committee	Researcher	17	13	76.5	Telephone & Personal
5.Community Network Group	Researcher	15	13	86.7	Telephone
6.Students	Job Coach	31	25	81.0	Personal
7.Job Coaches	Researcher	3	3	100.0	Personal
Total		180	135		

1.4 STUDENTS

During the three year project, a total of thirty-nine students were involved in placement activity. Eight of these students did not continue in their placements. Follow-up interviews were completed for seven of the eight and the reasons for non-completion were as follows:

Entrance into regular co-op program (n=4)
Adjustment difficulties (n=2)
Discontinued school (n=1)

Of the remaining thirty-one students, twenty-two were diagnosed as developmentally handicapped, five as physically handicapped, two as both developmentally and physically handicapped. No information was available on two of the students.

The preponderance of developmentally handicapped students is evident in the reading scores which were recorded on the students' records.

Reading Level (Grade)	#	%
1 - 3	15	48.4
4 - 8	5	16.2
Normal	2	6.5
N/A	9	29.1

The age distribution for the students was as follows.

Age	#	%
14	1	3.2
15	1	3.2
16	4	12.9
17	12	38.7
18	7	22.5
19	3	9.6
20	3	9.6

Twenty-one (67.7%) of the students were males and ten (32.3%) were females.

1.5 JOB PLACEMENTS

A majority of the students were involved in more than one job placement.

Number of Placements	Students	
	#	%
1	8	25.8
2	10	32.3
3	6	19.4
4	3	9.7
5	3	9.7
N/A	1	3.2

In total, seventy-three job placements were recorded in a variety of settings.

Placement	#
Kitchen/Restaurant Helper	16
Janitorial	12
Day Care Assistant	8
Retail Assistant	7
Car Wash Attendant	6
General Office Work	5
Furniture Restoration/Upholstery	4
Greenhouse Worker	2
Florist Assistant	2
Animal Care	2
Carpenter's Helper	2
Landscaping	1
Produce Packer	1
Library	1
Garage Assistant	1
N/A	3
Total	73

PART 2: PROCESS AND ADMINISTRATION

2.1 EMPLOYERS

Seventeen of the twenty-nine employer supervisors reported that they found out about the program through the Job Coaches. One respondent could not recall how the contact had been made and seven respondents indicated that the approach had come from someone else in their company. The remaining responses were as follows:

Educators (n=2)
Project Coordinator (n=1)
Social Service (n=1)

Twelve of the supervisors were initially contacted by phone, twelve were contacted in person and three were contacted by letter. Two respondents could not recall how they had been contacted.

Nineteen of the respondents reported that their decision to become involved in the program was made independently without outside assistance. Among the eight respondents who reported that they required some assistance in making their final decision, program staff were identified as the primary source of assistance.

Twenty-two respondents indicated that meetings had been held with program staff prior to commencing the placement. The number of meetings varied.

Number of Meetings	Number of Respondents
1	10
2	9
3	1
4	0
5+	2

Of the twenty-two who could recall preparatory meetings, twenty-one reported that they had been useful, primarily as a source of background information.

Once the placement was underway, monitoring was provided by the Job Coaches in twenty-eight of the twenty-nine locations. Twenty-three of the respondents indicated that the monitoring had been useful, four reported that it had not been useful and one provided a mixed response.

The primary reasons for finding the monitoring useful were varied.

Assist in supervising (n=9)
Sense of security for student (n=8)
Help in problem solving (n=3)
Helped employer get to know student (n=3)

Three primary reasons were provided for not finding the monitoring useful.

It put pressure on the student (n=2)
Nature of job did not require it (n=2)
Student did not require it (n=1)

The reported frequency of monitoring also varied across the placements.

Whenever student was there (n=10)
Once per week (n=6)
Every other week (n=3)
Other (n=3)
Uncertain (n=6)

Summary

Although most of the employers were approached about participation in the program by program staff, the decision to participate appeared to be made with relative ease by the employers. In a majority of cases, the decision was made, independently with little assistance or "pressure" from program representatives. It appears therefore that the program used a "soft sell" approach to the participating employers with relatively little need for a concerted "pitch" in most cases. As indicated later in this report, most of employers were motivated to participate by a desire to help the students and this desire appears to have been strong enough to require relatively little reinforcement or persuasion.

Most of the employers were involved in preparatory meetings prior to commencing the placement and these meeting were judged to be useful, primarily as a source of background information. In the majority of cases only one or two meetings were required.

The monitoring capacity of the Job Coaches was utilized in almost all of the placements with great frequency. The role played by the monitors was found to be useful by most of the employers for a variety of reasons. Most frequently they assisted in supervision and provided a sense of security for the student. On a few occasions they assisted in solving problems and helped the employer supervisor to "get to know" the student.

The results therefore suggest that the monitoring function of the Job Coaches was successfully implemented and the role which they played was of considerable value to the employers.

2.2 PARENTS

In contrast to the employers, the parents were most frequently approached about participating in the program by representatives from the educational system (n=25). Only four had been approached by Job Coaches. Other reported sources of contact were: Project Coordinator (n=1)
Social Service (n=1)
Student (n=1)

Of the thirty-seven respondents, five could not recall how they had been approached.

Most of the approaches were made by person (n=12) or by telephone (n=11). Six had been contacted by letter and four could not recall.

Preparatory meetings were reported by twenty-five of the respondents and the number of meetings varied.

Number of Meetings	Number of Respondents
1	9
2	11
3	1
4	1
don't know	

Of the twenty-five respondents who reported meetings, twenty-one found them useful, primarily as a source of background information. Four respondents reported that they had not been useful.

Twenty-nine of the thirty-seven respondents indicated that they had made the decision to participate in the program without assistance from any outside individuals. Among the six who reported that they required assistance, educators were most frequently cited as a source (n=3), followed by Job Coaches (n=2) and the employer (n=1).

Thirty-three of the respondents reported that their child had been monitored at the placement and three indicated that they did not know. Of those who reported that the monitoring took place, eight could not identify the person who provided the monitoring function.

Twenty-nine indicated that they felt the monitoring had been useful - most frequently as a source of security for the student (n=7) and for the purpose of making certain that someone was informed about how the placement was progressing (n=7). Other reasons given were: Providing supervision (n=5)
Protecting the student (n=2)
Problem solving (n=2)

Only one parent felt that the monitoring had not been useful and five responded that they were uncertain.

Fourteen parents were uncertain about how often the monitoring occurred and a majority of the rest of the respondents recognized that it was done on a frequent basis - at least once per week (n=16).

Summary

Most parents were approached, about participating in the program, by representatives from the educational system and the majority did not require any assistance in making their decision about participation. Preparatory meetings were held with a majority of the parents and these were judged to be a useful source of background information.

Most of the parents were aware that their child had been monitored and most reported that this component of the program had been useful. A number of reasons were provided for the utility of the monitoring although the most frequent functions mentioned were providing a source of security for the student and monitoring progress.

2.3 EDUCATORS

Most of the fifteen educators had been approached about involvement in the program by the Project Coordinator (n=6) or representatives from within the educational system (n=6). Two had been approached by the Job Coaches and one respondent was uncertain.

Eleven of the respondents indicated that meetings had been held prior to participating in the program. In three cases, meetings were not held and one respondent could not recall whether or not there had been preliminary meetings.

Among the eleven who were involved in preliminary meetings, all reported that they had been useful, primarily as a source of valuable background information.

All fifteen respondents indicated that they had made their decision to participate in the program in an independent manner, without assistance from any other individuals.

The responses to a number of items indicated a high degree of awareness about the key operational components of the program:

- Fourteen recognized that monitoring was involved
- Fourteen correctly identified the monitor.

All of the respondents reported that the availability of the Job Coaches for monitoring was useful. The reasons provided for this opinion were as follows:

Assistance in supervision (n=6)
Sense of security for the student (n=3)
Information provision (n=2)
Assist in problem-solving (n=1)
Combination of above (n=2)

Summary

The educators who were involved in this project had been approached

primarily by the Project Coordinator or by their colleagues within the educational system. In a majority of cases, they were involved in meetings prior to their formal participation and these meetings proved to be a useful source of background information. They were well informed about the monitoring function of the Job Coaches and perceived the role of the Job Coaches to be of importance to the project for a variety of reasons.

2.4 STEERING COMMITTEE

The majority of the twelve Steering Committee respondents had been recruited to the project by representatives from the Industry-Education Council (n=9). The remaining three respondents had been approached by colleagues within the educational system.

Preliminary meetings were held with eleven of the members and they were judged to be useful, primarily as a source of background information.

Half of the respondents indicated that no one had provided assistance in helping to decide whether or not to participate. Two had been aided by the Project Coordinator and one had been helped by the employer. Two could not recall.

Nine of the respondents were well informed about the role of the Job Coaches and all reported that the monitoring function had been useful. Once again, a variety of reasons were provided:

Assistance in supervision (n=6)
Sense of security for student (n=3)
Information provision (n=2)
Problem-solving (n=1)
Combination of above (n=3)

2.5 COMMUNITY AGENCY NETWORK GROUP

Of the thirteen respondents from this group, twelve indicated that they had been originally approached by the Project Coordinator. One reported contact by a representative of the Industry-Education Council. In all cases, preliminary meetings were held to discuss their potential involvement and nine of the respondents indicated that these meetings had been useful, primarily as a source of background information. Four respondents were uncertain as to the utility of these meetings.

Four of the members indicated that they had been assisted in their decision to participate by the Project Coordinator. Five responded that they had not been assisted by any one and four could not recall.

This group was disbanded after only one meeting because it was felt that meetings were unnecessary. According to the results of the interview with the Project Coordinator, the members felt that information pertaining to the project could be obtained from the Project Coordinator or through other committees upon which they served.

This group of respondents was the least well-informed about the details of program operations - 46% did not know if students were monitored, 69.2% did not know who provided the monitoring and 61.5% did not know if it was useful.

There appeared to be no clear understanding among the respondents about why the group was disbanded.

2.6 TIME INVOLVEMENT

Each group of respondents was asked to estimate the number of hours per month that they spent on activities related to Operation Employability. These results are presented below.

Group		Hours Per Month							
		Don't Know	0	-1	1-5	6-10	11-15	16-20	21+
Employers	#	0	2	2	2	4	6	6	7
	%	0.0	6.9	6.9	6.9	13.8	20.7	20.7	24.1
Parents	#	11	7	5	11	0	1	0	2
	%	29.7	18.9	13.5	29.7	0.0	2.7	0.0	5.4
Educators	#	2	1	2	7	1	1	0	1
	%	13.3	6.7	13.3	46.7	6.7	6.7	0.0	6.7
Steering	#	2	0	0	7	1	1	1	0
Committee	%	16.7	0.0	0.0	58.3	8.3	8.3	8.3	0.0
Network	#	3	3	1	6	0	0	0	0
Group	%	23.1	23.1	7.7	46.2	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0

The employers reported the greatest degree of time involvement. Almost two-thirds of them (65.5%) spent more than 11 hours per month. The corresponding figures for the other groups were - parents (8.0%), educators (13.0%), Steering Committee (16.0%) and Community Network Group (0.0%). Almost one in four employers spent more than 21 hours per month on program activities.

Although ten of the parents could not estimate their time expenditure, very few spent more than 5 hours per month.

Within the educator group, only 20.0% estimated that they spent more than five hours per month. This proportion was very close to that of the members of the Steering Committee (24.9%).

Within the Community Network Group, three could not estimate their time involvement and three reported no time involvements. Of the remaining seven respondents, six provided an estimate of one to five hours. It appears, therefore, that some contact was maintained with some members of this group

despite the discontinuation of meetings.

The respondents were also asked if their time involvement had increased, decreased or remained the same, during the course of their association with the project. These results were as follows:

Group		Change in Involvement			
		Remained the Same	Increased	Decreased	Don't Know
Employers	#	17	3	9	0
	%	58.6	10.3	31.0	0.0
Parents	#	26	4	4	3
	%	70.3	10.8	10.8	8.1
Educators	#	5	3	6	1
	%	33.3	20.0	40.0	6.7
Steering Committee	#	9	2	1	0
	%	75.0	16.7	8.3	0.0
Network Group	#	1	3	5	4
	%	7.7	23.1	38.5	31.7

Only 31.0% of the employers reported that their time involvement had decreased during the course of the project while 58.6% reported that it had stayed the same.

A large majority of parents (70.3%) and Steering Committee members (75.0%) indicated that their involvement remained the same with relative few reporting either an increase or a decrease.

The responses of the educators were relatively varied. An increased commitment was reported by 20.0%, a decrease by 40.0% and 33.3% indicated that their involvement had stayed the same.

The largest proportion of the Community Network Group (38.5%) reported a decreased involvement, although 31.7% could not answer the question. An increase was reported by 23.1% and only one respondent indicated that their involvement had remained the same.

Summary

It appears that a significant time involvement was required of the employers. Almost two-thirds of this group reported an investment of at least 11 hours per month on project activities. Even more significantly, almost a quarter of this group reported an expenditure of 24 hours or more. This clearly represents a significant investment of time and money by the employers - given that this investment of time involved for one placement student. If each placement student required 24 hours of employer time, then it appears that one person-year of company time would be required to support only five or six students. Given that, the students were also monitored, on a regular basis, by program staff it is noteworthy that a substantial investment in supervision and support was required to maintain a large proportion of the placements.

Relatively little time was required of the remaining participants. Of those who could provide an estimate, the majority of parents, educators, Steering Committee members and Community Network Group members reported an involvement of five hours or less per month.

2.7 SUMMARY

1. The recruitment of human resources to this program involved a number of vehicles. Representatives of the Industry-Education Council recruited most of the members of the Steering Committee and the Project Coordinator recruited most of the members of the Community Network Group. The educators who worked directly with the students were, most frequently, recruited by colleagues within the educational system and most of the employers were first approached by the Job Coaches.

2. Preparatory meetings were held with a majority of the participants and, in most cases, these meetings had served a useful purpose as a source of background information.

3. Most of the participants made their decision to participate in the program with relatively little assistance from other individuals and this suggests that the large majority of these respondents were motivated to participate through a direct interest in the program and the employment problems of handicapped students. The nature of this motivation will be discussed in the next section of this report.

4. The monitoring role which was fulfilled by the Job Coaches was judged to be useful by a large majority of the participants. The most frequently mentioned benefits of the monitoring were:
   - Assisting in student supervision
   - Providing a sense of security to students
   - Reporting on progress
   - Problem-solving

5. All of the participants, with the exception of the members of the Community Network Group, appeared to be well-informed about the key operating components of the program.

6. The Community Network Group met on only one occasion. A number of the members of this group were uncertain as to why it had been disbanded

although some members continued to devote time to the project on an individual basis. The primary function of this group was to provide advice to the project and enhance the development of a sense of community ownership of the project. All members of this group were involved in the delivery of community-based services to handicapped persons. It appears that the services of this group were utilized on an individual and irregular basis.

7. Significant time involvements were required of the employers. It is noteworthy that this involvement was required despite the regular presence of the Job Coaches in monitoring the placement. It appeared, therefore, that a significant degree of support and supervision was required by the students, during the course of their placements.

The other groups of participants reported lower level of time involvement than the employers.

PART 3: EXPECTATIONS

3.1 THE STUDENTS

Among the student respondents, 72.4% reported that they wanted a "job" after finishing secondary school. The remaining 27.6% indicated that they were uncertain about what they wanted to do after completing school.

A question pertaining to the kind of jobs they hoped to obtain following graduation elicited the following responses:

Type of Job	Number
Kitchen/restaurant	3
Day care helper	2
Office work	2
Grocery store	2
Construction	1
Industrial labourer	1
Car wash	1
Computer operator	1
School	1

The majority of these responses indicated that the career aspirations of these students involved unskilled or semi-skilled position.

An analysis was then carried out to compare the actual placements with each students' career aspirations to ascertain the extent to which the placement reflected their aspirations. Of the students who reported a career aspiration, 41.0% had been placed in a job which was identical to their reported aspiration. The remaining 58.8% were in placements which were not identical to their expressed career goals. It is noteworthy that the rotation of students through a variety of work experiences was done for the purpose of determining the appropriateness of different work settings.

It is noteworthy, however, that 86.0% of the students reported that their placement had helped them to develop skills which they wanted to learn. Within this group of students, 82.8% reported that these were job skills while 17.2%

indicated that the desired learning occurred with respect to social skills.

When asked if they thought that the work experiences would help them decide on a career, 72.0% responded to the affirmative, 24.0% responded negatively while 4.0% did not know.

Summary

A majority of the students reported specific career aspirations. Although a slight majority of these students did not participate in placements which were identical to the jobs which they desired, after completing school, a large majority of the students indicated that they had developed the skills which they wanted to develop.

This suggests that many of these desired skills were not specific to a placement which was identical to their career aspirations. Despite the fact that the placements did not always completely match the students' career aspirations, the majority of the students reported that their skill development expectations had been fulfilled by their placement experiences.

3.2 EMPLOYERS

Nineteen of the twenty-nine employers (65.5%) reported that their decision to participate in the program was primarily motivated by their desire to help the student. Other reasons given were:

- Needed worker (n=3)
- Cost savings (n=1)
- Public image (n=1)
- Other (n=5)

In general, the responses suggested that the employers' participation had been quite positive in nature. All respondents indicated that they would be willing to participate in the program for another year. When asked if they had any concerns about their participation, 62.1% (n=18) replied that they did not. Specific concerns mentioned were as follows:

- Improved matching of students to jobs (n=2)
- More monitoring required (n=2)
- More time in work place needed (n=1)
- Developing false expectations in students (n=1)
- Too much red tape (n=1)
- Need rewards for students (n=1)
- More emphasis on physically handicapped (n=1)

Employers were asked about their perceptions of the primary goals of the program. The largest group (86.2%) responded that the enhancement of the students' employability through work experience was the major goal. Other responses were as follows:

- Determining student interests (n=2)
- Develop social skills (n=2)
- Change employer attitudes (n=2)

In general, the respondents appeared to be quite positive about the effects of the program upon student employability. Ninety-three percent (n=27) believed that the placement experience would help disabled students to find employment. It is noteworthy, however, that only 51.7% or fifteen of the respondents believed that Hamilton employers were "ready" to hire handicapped persons. Seven respondents felt that local employers were not ready and the primary

reason provided was a lack of exposure among employers to the disabled population. The remaining seven employers did not know whether or not their colleagues in other companies were ready to hire the disabled.

Given the importance of "exposure" in these responses, it is noteworthy that a majority of the employers reported that they had "learned" from their experience in the program (n=25). The largest number indicated that they had learned "interacting skills" with the handicapped (n=13).

It is also noteworthy that the primary motivation for the employers' willingness to participate again in the program were related to personal development issues rather than business development. The primary reasons given for continued participation were as follows:

It helped the student (n=11)
Employer received personal satisfaction (n=8)
Student was an asset (n=3)

Summary

In summary, employers were primarily motivated by altruistic concerns to participate in the program. Their experiences were generally positive although a few concerns were mentioned - most frequently, they felt that the abilities of the students had been over-estimated by the program staff. After their involvement in the program, the motivation for further involvement continued to be based on issues of personal development rather than business development.

The clearly identified "increased employability" as the primary goal of the program and the vast majority believed that the program had been successful in achieving this goal. A slight majority felt that most employers were "ready" to hire the handicapped and the most frequent reason given for a lack of willingness involved insufficient exposure of employers to the handicapped.

The employers in the study reported that they had learned from their exposure - most frequently they learned skills in interacting with the handicapped.

3.3 PARENTS

Thirty-three of the thirty-seven parents (89.3%) agreed to participate in the program because of a desire to help their child. Three parents did not respond to this question.

A large majority of the parents (89.2%) would be willing to be involved in the program for another year, primarily because of the benefits the students were receiving. Three parents who would not participate reported that they were not satisfied with their child's experience in the program. One parent indicated that their child was graduating next year and consequently would not be eligible for inclusion in the program.

Seventy-six percent (n=28) identified "enhanced employability" as the primary goal of the program. This reflected a shift from year one results. At that time, a majority of the parents had identified "finding employment" as a primary goal. It appeared, therefore, that the parents' perceptions of the program's goals became more accurate over time.

Although 78.4% of the parents felt that the placement experience would help the students obtain employment, a majority did not feel that Hamilton employers were ready to hire handicapped students (40.5% or n=15). The primary reason for this lack of willingness was a lack of exposure to handicapped persons.

The parents were asked if they had learned anything new from their experience in the program and 27 (73.0%) responded to the affirmative. Nine (24.3%) responded that they had not learned anything new and one parent did not respond. Among the parents who had learned something as a result of the participation in the program, the responses were varied:

Learned about benefits of work experience (n=7)
Learned student was capable (n=7)
Learned interaction skills (n=1)
Personal sense of reward (n=4)

When asked about specific concerns with respect to the program, twenty-two of the parents or 59.5% responded that they did not have any concerns. The concerns noted by the remaining fifteen parents who responded to this question were as follows:

Inappropriate placements (n=4)
More challenging placements needed (n=4)
Concerns that program would be discontinued (n=2)
Lack of employment opportunities (n=2)
Others (n=3)

Summary

The parents motivation for agreeing to participate in the program was based upon their desire to help their children enhance their employability. They viewed this dimension as the primary goal of the program and were generally positive about the effects that the placement had upon the employability of their child.

They tended to be less optimistic, however, about the willingness of employers to hire handicapped workers.

3.4 EDUCATORS

All of the educator respondents reported that they had been motivated to participate in the program because of the potential benefits for the student. They all agreed that enhanced employability was the primary goal of the program.

Based upon these expectations all of the educators felt that the students' placement experience would help the students obtain employment and all respondents indicated that they would be willing to participate in the program during the next year.

With respect to their perceptions of the willingness of Hamilton employers to hire handicapped students, the educators were more optimistic than the parents and equally optimistic as the employers. Eight (53.3%) responded to the affirmative, three responded negatively and four did not know. The primary reason for the unwillingness was identified as a "lack of exposure" to the handicapped.

When asked about their concerns, only 13.3% (n=2) indicated that they had no concerns about the program. The largest group (n=5) were concerned that the program might be discontinued. Other concerns were as follows:

Need more student updates (n=2)
Students post-secondary employment (n=2)
Duplication with existing co-op education (n=1)
Insufficient time (n=1)
Insufficient staff (n=1)
Transportation problems for students (n=1)

Thirteen of the respondents (86.7%) indicated that they had learned something as a result of their participation in the program. Most frequently (n=5) they reported that they had learned about the benefits of work experience for the students. Knowledge gain occurred in regard to a number of other areas:

Interaction skills with disabled (n=2)
Knowledge about disabled (n=4)
Capabilities of disabled students (n=2)

Summary

The educators shared the positive perceptions of the employers and parents. Their expectations for the program were clearly focused upon student employability and they believed that their program expectations had been fulfilled.

3.5 STEERING COMMITTEE AND COMMUNITY NETWORK GROUP

Ten of the twelve Steering Committee members (83.3%) reported that their decision to participate in project was based upon their desire to help the students. This was also true of twelve of the thirteen community network members.

Enhanced employability was identified as the primary program goal by 75 percent of the Steering Committee members and 92.3% of the Community Network members. In addition to the employability goals, Steering Committee members also identified the following goal areas:

Development of social skills (n=2)
Catalyst for Boards of Education (n=1)

These two groups were considerably less optimistic than employers and educators with respect to their perception of employers' readiness to hire persons with disabilities. Only 42.0% of the Steering Committee and 23.0% of the Community Network Group believed that employers were ready. The primary reasons for the pessimism were quite different. Steering Committee members reported that the lack of willingness was due, in equal proportions, to a lack of exposure to persons with disabilities and negative stereotypes. Community Network members felt it was due to inadequacies of persons with disabilities - of the seven members who believed employers were not ready to hire disabled persons, three members did not provide a reason and four members believed it was due to inadequacies in persons with disabilities.

It is noteworthy, therefore, that the group which had the least direct contact with the program - the Community Network Group - tended to be the most pessimistic about employers willingness to hire and were more apt to attribute this unwillingness to inadequacies in disabled persons rather than to a "lack of exposure" or negative stereotypes.

In response to the question pertaining to concerns about the program, the members of the Community Network Group identified a variety of areas:

Concerns about program's future (n=4)

Concerns about a lack of involvement by community agencies (n=3)

Concerns about the raising of false expectations in students (n=2)

Only 15.4% (n=2) of this group indicated that they had no concerns about the program.

Within the twelve Steering Committee respondents, four or 33.3% indicated that they had "no concerns" about the program and one respondent did not reply to this item. Three members were primarily concerned about the possibility that the program might not be continued and the remaining respondents introduced a number of issues:

Lack services after student turns 21 (n=2)

Insufficient number of students involved due to resource limitations (n=2)

Concerns about extent of commitment by Boards of Education (n=1)

Summary

Both of these groups emphasized the employability-based nature of the program goals although Steering Committee members were somewhat less likely than the other groups to identify employability as the primary goal.

It is noteworthy, that both of these groups were more pessimistic than the educators and employers about the willingness of local employers to hire the disabled. It was also noteworthy that the group which had the least direct contact with the program were most likely to report that this unwillingness was primarily due to inadequacies in persons with disabilities rather than a lack of exposure or negative stereotypes. It is unlikely, however, that this pessimism is based upon a lack of familiarity with disabled persons - most members of the Community Network Group were recruited because of their experience in the sector.

3.6 SUMMARY

1. There was a strong degree of agreement among all of the participants about the primary purpose of the program - the enhancement of employability among the students. It is noteworthy that less agreement had been found in earlier evaluations of this program. At the earlier stages of program development there had been some confusion about the role of the program with respect to finding employment for the students - particularly among the parents. Some members of this group had hoped that the program would provide a job finding service for the students.

   It appears that this confusion had diminished by the third year of operation and all of the participants emphasized the employability-enhancing focus of the program.

2. The vast majority of the participants were motivated to participate in the program by a desire to help the student. This trend was of particular note in the employer responses - only three of the twenty-nine employers motivated to participate in the program by a need for additional workers.

3. The large majority of respondents indicated that their expectation had been fulfilled - most felt that the placement experience would help the students to find employment as a result of the development of job-related and social skills.

4. A minority of respondents in all groups reported some concerns about the program. Many of these concerns appeared to arise from their experiences with individual placements and they took a variety of forms. The most frequent concerns noted were:
   - a need for an improved matching of students to placements
   - a need for more staff or monitoring assistance
   - concerns about the continuation of the program past the "pilot project" phase.

5. The participants reported mixed feelings about the willingness of employers in Hamilton-Wentworth to hire handicapped persons. The proportion of each group who believed that employers were ready ranged from a low of 23% among the Community Network Group to a high of 53.0% among the educators and 52.0% among employers. There was, however, a high degree of consensus about the source of "unwillingness" among employers - a lack of exposure to persons with disabilities.

6. The student responses were generally positive about the experiences in the placement. A special analysis of these respondents suggested that the program was most successful with students who had specific career aspirations. It appeared, therefore, that this program was successful in responding to the needs of students who had developed some form of career expectations but was less successful in developing career goals among students who were uncertain about what they wanted to do after completing school. The latter group was less satisfied with their placement experience.

7. Of all of the groups interviewed, the students were most likely to report "concerns" about the program. All of the reported concerns were directly related to their placement experiences - monotony, "tiredness", job tasks and working conditions.

PART 4: OUTCOMES

4.1 THE STUDENTS

Twenty-three (92.0%) of the twenty-five students indicated that they "enjoyed" their placements. It is notable, however, that only sixteen or 72.0% indicated that they were "satisfied" with their placement experience.

When asked if they had any concerns about their placements, 53.3% answered to the affirmative. The expressed concerns were as follows:

Monotony and/or tiredness (n=7)
Dissatisfaction with job tasks (n=5)
Dissatisfaction with working conditions (n=4)

When asked what they liked best about working, twenty-four indicated that they enjoyed developing job skills while seven also mentioned social skills. Twenty-three of the twenty-five students reported positive relationships with their co-workers and twenty-four indicated that there was always someone there who could be asked to help them with their job.

Summary

The discrepancy between the 92.0% of students reporting that they employed their placements and the 72.0% who reported that they were "satisfied" with their placement was noteworthy. A possible explanation for this discrepancy arose from further analysis which correlated the students' responses pertaining to "expectations" with their responses pertaining to "outcomes".

A cross tabulation of these responses yielded the following results. All of the students who did not report "satisfaction" with their placement also did not report specific career aspirations. Most of these students, in turn, reported that the placement had not helped them to decide on a career.

Taken together, these results suggested the following - students who did not have specific career aspirations were not helped in the development of career plans by their placement experience. As a result, they might have enjoyed their placement experiences but were not "satisfied" with respect to

their needs to develop career goals.

Conversely, it appeared that the students who possessed specific career aspirations tended to be more satisfied with their placement experiences.

4.2 EMPLOYER RESPONSES

Student Progress and Employability

Twenty-four of the 29 employers or 82.8% were satisfied with the students' progress during year three. When asked an open-ended question pertaining to the primary areas of progress, it was noteworthy that the most frequent responses were social skills (n=7), increased emotional security (n=6) and other areas of personal development (n=6). Very few responses referenced specific job skills.

It is noteworthy that the proportion of employers who were satisfied with the students' progress changed minimally from 84.2% in year one to 82.8% in year three.

In response to a question related to observed improvement in specific student skills, the employers were relatively positive.

Skill Area	% Observing Improvement
Self-confidence	82.8
Following instructions	75.8
Responsibility	75.5
Social skills	69.0
Cooperation	55.2
Dependability	44.8
Punctuality	24.1
Dress habits	3.4

The employers were also asked to indicate which skill areas needed further improvement.

Skill Area	% Reporting Improvements Needed
Self-confidence	34.5
Following instructions	27.6
Dependability	13.8
Social skills	13.8
Punctuality	10.0
Responsibility	10.3
Dress habits	6.9
Cooperation	3.4

It is noteworthy that the largest proportion of employers identified "self-confidence" and "following instructions" as the areas of improvement in the student. These two areas were also most frequently identified as the areas requiring further improvement.

Although a majority of the employers had observed improvement in most of the skill areas, only a minority reported a need for further improvement. This suggests strongly that a satisfactory degree of skill improvement had occurred in most of the placements.

The employers were also asked whether they would hire their placement student, if a suitable job became available. Forty-eight percent responded that they would not, forty-one percent indicated that they would and 10% were uncertain. The percentage who would be unwilling to hire their placement student increased slightly across the three years - 40.0% in year one, 41.4% in year two and 48.0% in year three.

The reasons for an unwillingness to hire the students were varied:

A special job had been created for the student (n=4)
Too much supervision required (n=3)
More training required (n=3)
Student is unsuitable (n=3)

It is important to note, however, that substantial differences occurred between the three Boards of Education with respect to this item. The proportion of employers who reported that they would not be willing to hire their placement student ranged from a low of 28.6% in one Board to a high of 70.0% in another.

Among the combined group of employers, the most frequent reasons given for an unwillingness to hire the student tended to focus upon two common themes:

1. Students did not have the required job skills, and
2. The students were not ready to work without supervision.

Program Variables

The employers were asked about their level of satisfaction with respect to a number of program variables. These results are presented on the following page.

	Satisfied %	Dissatisfied %	Don't Know %
Finding financial resources	13.7	10.3	72.4
Securing human resources from the Boards of Education	34.8	6.9	48.3
The Boards of Education's participation and degree of commitment	58.6	10.3	31.0
Community ownership of the program	27.6	17.2	55.2
Support secured from business	37.9	13.8	48.3
Support secured from community agencies	27.5	10.3	62.1
Support secured from project leadership	51.7	10.3	37.9
Community awareness of the project	20.7	51.7	24.1
Support secured from media	6.8	55.2	34.5

In almost all categories the number of "satisfied" responses outnumbered the number of "dissatisfied" responses although of particular note is the large number of "don't know" responses. This was due to a lack of knowledge, on the part of a number of employers, about the administrative aspects of the program.

The two primary exceptions to this trend involved media coverage and community awareness - a majority of the respondents were dissatisfied in this area.

Summary

In general, the employer responses contained mixed results. Although a majority of the employers were satisfied with the students' progress and only a minority felt that additional skill improvements were required, the number of employers who reported that they would be unwilling to hire the student increased from 40% in year 1 to 48% in year 2. The most common reasons given for this unwillingness involved a deficiency in work skills and an augmented need for supervision. It appeared, therefore, that employers were saying that they could find other persons for the position who possessed higher quality work skills and required less supervision. It is noteworthy, however, that these results differed across the three Boards of Education. This issue will be discussed in more detail, later in this report.

With respect to program variables, only a small minority reported dissatisfaction with all of the dimension queried, with the exception of media coverage and community relations. It appears that the employers would have preferred to receive more exposure for their participation in the program. In general, the relatively high level of "don't know" responses indicated that the employers did not feel knowledgeable enough about the program to draw any conclusions.

It is particularly notable that almost one half of the employers could not respond to the item about the Boards of Education's commitment of human resources to the program and almost one third could not respond to the item pertaining to Boards' level of participation and commitment. This suggests that improved communications might be required if the Boards of Education are to benefit from this program, with respect to their relationship with employers. It is noteworthy that, of the employers who did have an opinion about the Boards of Education, the responses were overwhelming positive.

4.3 PARENTAL RESPONSES

Student Progress and Employability

Thirty-two of the thirty-seven parents (86.5%) were satisfied with the students' progress during year three. In response to the open-ended question pertaining to areas of improvement, the most frequent responses related to increased emotional security (n=13) and improved personal development (n=7).

In response to a question related to observed improvements in specific student skills, the parents were relatively positive.

Skill Area	% Observing Improvement
Self-confidence	81.1
Social skills	75.7
Following instructions	72.0
Responsibility	59.5
Cooperation	56.7
Dependability	43.2
Dress habits	37.8
Punctuality	32.4

It is noteworthy that these responses were not very different from those of the employers, with one exception - a substantially greater proportion of parents noted improvements in dress habits.

The parents were also asked to indicate which skill areas "needed further improvement".

Skill Area	% Reporting Improvements Needed
Self-confidence	40.5
Social skills	32.4
Responsibility	27.0
Following instructions	24.3
Punctuality	16.2
Dependability	16.2
Cooperation	16.2
Dress habits	16.2

Although the rank ordering of these factors closely resembled the results from the employers, it is noteworthy that the parents were more likely to believe that further improvements were required than were employers. Both groups, however, indicated that self-confidence was the area which had improved the most but which still required the greatest degree of further improvement.

The parents tended to have a more positive view of the students' employability than did the employers. When asked if they would hire their child if they were an employer, 81.1% responded that they would and only 8.1% responded negatively. A further 3.0% gave a qualified response. The corresponding figures for the employers were, 41.4%, 48.3% and 10.3%.

Program Variables

The parents were asked about their level of satisfaction with respect to a number of program variables. These results are presented below.

	Satisfied %	Dissatisfied %	Don't Know %
Finding financial resources	13.5	10.8	72.4
Securing human resources from the Boards of Education	35.1	13.5	48.6
The Boards of Education's participation and degree of commitment	67.6	10.8	18.9
Community ownership of the program	30.4	16.2	48.6
Support secured from business	40.5	21.6	29.7
Support secured from community agencies	24.3	10.8	59.5
Support secured from project leadership	44.0	6.7	33.3
Community awareness of the project	21.6	51.3	24.3
Support secured from media	37.8	45.9	10.8

The parent responses were very similar to those of the employers with a relatively large number of "don't know" responses in most categories and a relatively low degree of satisfaction with respect to media coverage and community awareness.

Summary

The vast majority of the parents were satisfied with their child's progress in the program. Most frequently, they identified this progress as related to emotional security and personal development. They were very similar to the employers in terms of their reporting of improvement in their child's skill levels but tended to be more critical than the employers with respect to the needs for further improvements.

Despite the fact that they tended to be more critical, they were much more likely to report that they would hire their child, if they were an employer, than the actual employers were. The parents, therefore, appeared to be much more optimistic about the employability of these students than did the employers.

With respect to the program variables, the parents were similar to the employers with respect to a relatively high frequency of "don't know" responses on a number of the items and a relatively high degree of dissatisfaction with media coverage and community awareness.

4.4 EDUCATOR RESPONSES

Student Progress and Employability

All of the educators were satisfied with the students' progress (n=15). In response to an open-ended question relating to the major areas of progress, only 2 respondents indicated "improved work skills". The educators consequently emphasized skills related to the personal development of the students.

In response to a question pertaining to observed improvement in specific skills, the educators were very positive in their appraisals.

Skill Area	% Observing Improvement
Social skills	86.7
Self-confidence	80.0
Following instructions	80.0
Responsibility	66.7
Cooperation	66.7
Dependability	53.4
Dress habits	40.0
Punctuality	33.4

As a group, the educators were the most positive with respect to the observance of improvement. A higher proportion of the educators noted improvement in the students on six of the eight dimensions than did the employers on seven of the eight dimensions, than did the parents.

The same trends were obvious in the educators' response to a question related to specific skill areas which continued to require improvement.

Skill Area	% Reporting Improvements Needed
Social skills	26.7
Following instructions	20.0
Self-confidence	20.0
Punctuality	10.3
Dependability	6.7
Responsibility	0.0
Cooperation	0.0
Dress Habits	0.0

Compared to the employers, a smaller percentage of educators responded that further improvements were needed on six of the eight dimensions. Relative to the parents, a lower proportion of educators reported a need for improvement on all of the dimensions.

The educators were also asked whether or not they would hire these students, if an appropriate position became available. Eleven (73.3%) responded to the affirmative and two (13.3%) responded that they would not.

Program Variables

The educators were asked about their level of satisfaction with respect to a number of program variables. These results are presented below.

	Satisfied %	Dissatisfied %	Don't Know %
Finding financial resources	40.0	13.3	40.0
Securing human resources from the Boards of Education	73.3	6.7	13.3
The Boards of Education's participation and degree of commitment	73.3	20.0	6.7
Community ownership of the program	53.3	6.7	33.3
Support secured from business	86.6	0.0	13.3
Support secured from project leadership	60.0	6.7	33.3
Community awareness of the project	53.4	20.0	26.7
Support secured from media	46.7	6.7	46.6

In all of the categories, educators reported a lower proportion of "don't know" responses than either the parents or employers. The frequency of "don't know" responses were lowest in response to those dimensions which were most immediately related to their involvement in the project - support from business and the Boards of Education. The vast majority were satisfied with the support they had received from business (86.6%) and a smaller majority were satisfied with the support received from the Boards of Education (73.3%).

Summary

The educators tended to be more positive than either the parents or employers with most aspects of student progress and development. They appeared to emphasize personal development issues over job skills in their appraisals of student progress.

With respect to their degree of optimism about the students' employability they fell between the levels of the parents (most optimistic) and the employers (least optimistic).

Their evaluation of the program variables tended to include fewer "don't know" responses and more "satisfied" responses than either the employers or parents. It is probable that their role in the program resulted in a greater awareness about these aspects of program functioning.

4.5 STEERING COMMITTEE RESPONSES

As a result of their lack of contact with students, this group was not asked questions pertaining to student progress.

The results pertaining to their satisfaction with program variables are presented below.

	Satisfied %	Dissatisfied %	Don't Know %
Finding financial resources	83.3	16.7	0.0
Securing human resources from the Boards of Education	100.0	0.0	0.0
The Boards of Education's participation and degree of commitment	100.0	0.0	0.0
Community ownership of the program	50.0	25.0	25.0
Support secured from business	66.7	25.0	8.3
Support secured from community agencies	75.0	16.7	8.3
Support secured from project leadership	91.6	8.3	0.0
Community awareness of the project	66.0	8.3	25.0
Support secured from media	83.3	16.7	0.0

This group of respondents had the lowest frequency of "don't know" responses and the highest frequency of "satisfied" responses.

All of the respondents were satisfied with the support and commitment from the Boards of Education and the large majority were satisfied with their ability to secure financial resources for the program. The greatest degree of dissatisfaction (25% of respondents) was regarded in response to items concerning the degree of community ownership and the degree of support from business.

In contrast with the other groups of respondents, the low frequency of "don't know" responses within the Steering Committee is undoubtably a function of their role within the program - as the core administrative and advisory committee this group was much more involved in the design and administrative

components of the program.

Given this heightened level of familiarity, the Committee members were generally very positive in their evaluation of these key administrative dimensions.

4.6 SUMMARY

All groups of respondents recorded a high degree of satisfaction with student progress. In the majority of cases, this progress was noted in the students' emotional security, social skills and personal development.

A majority of the respondents in all groups reported that no further improvement was needed in the skill areas included in the survey. The area which was most frequently noted as requiring further improvement by the employers and parents was "self-confidence". The educators were more likely to emphasize social skills.

In general, then, the students' work experience did appear to result in "progress" towards a heightened degree of employability in most of the students.

From the students' perspective, the work placement was also viewed as a generally positive experience. The vast majority indicated that they enjoyed their placement although a somewhat reduced proportion reported that they were satisfied with their experience. Dissatisfaction appeared to be concentrated among the students who did not possess specific career aspirations. It appeared, therefore, that the placement experience was of most benefit to those students who had developed some degree of career plans.

Despite the generally positive response of the employers, it was noteworthy that only 41.0% of this group indicated that they would hire the student if a suitable job became available. The reasons for this unwillingness were varied. In some cases, the employer had created a "special" job for the student which would not be a part of their regular work force. In other cases the demands of supervision and the need for more training were identified.

With respect to the program variables, the results of the interviews led to the following general conclusions.

1. Most participants, particularly among the educators and the parents, were dissatisfied with the degree of media coverage about and community

awareness of the program. Given the potential public relations benefits of employer involvement in this type of program, this result suggested that improved community awareness might be a needed priority in the years ahead.

2. A relatively high frequency of "don't know" responses among the employers and parents suggested that these groups were not very well-informed about some key dimensions of the program. A relatively large proportion of employers, for example, were not aware of the human resources commitment which was made by the Boards of Education. Given that the vast majority of respondents who did hold an opinion were positive in their evaluations, this suggests that improved communications might result in improved public relations for the Boards of Education.

3. In general, it appeared that improved communication would yield positive results. In all groups, for all program variables, the responses were generally positive among respondents who did hold an opinion.

PART 5: PORTABILITY

5.0 PORTABILITY

"Portability" refers to the possibility of other communities successfully replicating the results of the Hamilton program. The specific questions which the present analysis attempted to address were as follows:

1. Were the job placements unique to the employment characteristics of Hamilton-Wentworth.
2. Were there unique support service components in the local community which acted to enhance the effectiveness of the programs which might not be available in other communities.
3. Were there important differences between the results obtained by the three Boards of Education which might have consequences for program portability.

1. Nature of Job Placements

The Hamilton-Wentworth economy has traditionally been dominated by large, heavy manufacturing industries. During the 1980's, however, a reduction in manufacturing employment and a rapid increase in service sector employment has changed the local labour force dramatically.

It is notable that almost all of the job placements were in small businesses with a majority in the service sector. These appear to be the type of positions and employers which are present in most municipal economies - day care centres, restaurants, retail outlets and non-profit organizations. A breakdown of the participating employers in 1988/89 is presented below:

Non-profit organization (n=11)
Restaurants (n=6)
Food stores (n=4)
Other retail (n=10)
Furniture/carpentry (n=3)
Hotels (n=2)
Municipal government (n=2)
Media (n=2)
Other (n=3)

In summary, these results suggest that the type of employer involved in the program would not limit the portability of the program to other communities.

2. Community Service Characteristics

Hamilton-Wentworth contains a wide variety of resources for mentally handicapped persons. Given the size of the community and the breadth of available services, it is hypothetically possible that the program would be less effective in smaller communities which are lacking in support services. The evidence obtained in this study suggests that this was not a factor in the program's success.

The participating students and employers were supported by program staff with little or no involvement of community agency personnel. The Community Network Group, which was the primary vehicle for involving community agencies only met on one occasion.

It appears, therefore, that the program operated in relative isolation from the community support system. This would suggest that the program could operate in communities which contained relatively few support services.

The one major exception to this general conclusion relates to transportation services. Hamilton-Wentworth contains a specialized transportation service for the disabled which was used, on occasion, to transport students to their placements.

3. Inter-Board Variations

The fact that this program was adopted by three individual Boards of Education provided a unique opportunity to test for differences which might arise between Boards. If, for example, the program was unsuccessful in one of the Boards, this would suggest that key limitations to portability might exist.

As mentioned earlier in this report, important differences did occur in a few key dimensions. It is important to emphasize that the numbers involved are very small when analyzed for the individual Boards of Education. The results, therefore, need to be interpreted with considerable caution. In respect for the

confidentiality of individual Board results, the names of the Boards of Education and the actual numbers will not be presented in this report - only percentages will be reported. The key results are presented below.

Student Responses	Board A	Board B	Board C
% Satisfied with placement	61	86	83
% Enjoyed placement	83	100	100
% Reason for disliking placement			
Boredom	29	14	17
Job Tasks	18	14	16
Work conditions	24	14	0
% Want job after school	57	86	86
% Felt placement helped career decision	58	71	100
Employer Responses			
% Spending more than 16 hours/month	80	30	43
% Satisfied with student progress	100	60	93
% Willing to hire student	40	30	50

With respect to student responses, it is important to note that Board A tended to have lower levels of student satisfaction and a higher proportion of complaints regarding "boredom" and "work conditions". It is noteworthy that the students in this Board were the least likely to report that they wanted a job after completing school and that the placement experience had helped them to make a career decision.

These variations among the Boards may, therefore, have been due to differences in screening. Board A was more likely to include students who did not possess career aspirations and, as discussed earlier in the report, were least likely to be satisfied with their placement experiences.

The employer responses also showed some interesting differences. The employers involved with Board B were least likely to be satisfied with student progress and were least likely to report a willingness to hire the student. They were also least likely to have spent more than 16 hours per month in

supervision of the student.

It is interesting that Board A, which had the lowest level of student satisfaction had the highest level of employer satisfaction and time commitment.

Unfortunately, the limited number of students and employers involved in this analysis prevents a more systematic examination of the causes of these differences. The extent to which these differences arose from the types of employers utilized, the type of student selected or the kind of support provided by the Boards cannot be addressed by this analysis while, at the same time, respecting the confidentiality of results from the individual Boards of Education.

In general, however, some important differences did appear to exist between the Boards with respect to the implementation of the program. These differences did appear to have some impact upon the program outcomes.

Summary

The portability of the Hamilton-Wentworth project does not appear to be limited by any unique characteristics of the local employment market or community support system. Some differences were noted, however, in the results obtained by the three Boards of Education although the limited sample required caution in the interpretation of these results. The analysis did suggest, however, that the results were affected by some unidentified differences in the way the three Boards implemented the program.

It is noteworthy that the Steering Committee played a particularly important role in Hamilton-Wentworth because of the need to co-ordinate the activities of three Boards of Education. This need had obvious implications for the membership and functions of the committee. If individual Boards of Education undertake the development of a similar program within their jurisdictions, the structure and function of a Steering Committee should reflect their unique requirements.

PART 6: CONCLUSIONS

6.0 CONCLUSIONS

1. The results of this evaluation strongly suggest that the development of this program resulted from strong commitments, on the part of all participants to the goal of enhancing the employability of students with disabilities. Very few participants reported that they required "convincing" to get involved in the program. Recruitment was based upon a "soft-sell" approach and this appears to have been effective.

2. The interviews which were conducted during the first year evaluation indicated that some confusion did exist with respect to the primary goals of the program. This was particularly true of the parents group - a proportion of this group believed that the program would directly assist in finding employment for their child. This confusion has resolved during subsequent years and, at the time of the third year evaluation, there was a clear recognition among all participants that the focus of the program was upon the enhancement of employability, rather than upon employment placement.

3. It was notable that very few employers reported that they had been motivated to become involved in the program because of perceived benefits to their business. It is also important to note that this perception did not appear to change as a result of the experience with the program. Although the vast majority of the employers were willing to continue their participation in the program, the primary motivation for continuation was based upon benefits to the student rather than upon benefits to the employer. Given the amount of time that was required of the employers, a significant commitment to student benefits was required.

4. With respect to the actual implementation of the program, the preparatory meeting which were held with both the employers and the parents appeared to be beneficial as a source of background information. The ongoing presence of program staff (Job Coach) to monitor each placement also appeared to be a key component. These staff assisted in the supervision of the students, provided a sense of security for the students and assisted in problem-

solving with both the students and the employers.

5. One of the most important lessons learned from this pilot project relates to the time commitments that were required to support the students in their placement. During the first year of the project it became apparent that one staff person, in the form of the Program Coordinator, could not provide the degree of support required. The employment of three Job Coaches in year two proved to be a decision of key importance. These Job Coaches carried a complement of students ranging from 9 to 12 across the three Boards of Education.

   Even with the addition of the Job Coaches, however, a considerable investment of time by the employer supervisors was required. Only a few employers, however, noted that this was a source of concern.

6. The only component of the initial plan which was not implemented involved the Community Network Group. This group, which was to serve both an advisory and liaison function, met on only one occasion although some individual members did report some degree of ongoing involvement in the program.

   This does not appear to have resulted in any adverse impacts upon the program, as of this stage of its development. It is notable, in this regard, that the majority of the Steering Committee members were "satisfied" with the degree of support that they had received from community agencies.

   At the same time, however, a significant number of the members of the Community Network Group appeared to be relatively uninformed about the operational details of the program. It is noteworthy that many of these members will bear the responsibility for serving this client population when they leave the secondary school system and it would appear that improved communications with this group would be warranted.

7. It appeared that the expectations of almost all of the participants had been met by the program. There was a general consensus that the students' employability had increased through the development of both job-related and social skills. Most of the participants also agreed that no further improvement was required.

8. An analysis of the student responses suggested that the programm appeared most likely to succeed with students who reported career aspirations. The students who did not report career plans were least likely to report "satisfaction" with their placements.

9. A significant proportion of the participant groups reported that they did not believe local employers were ready to hire the handicapped, primarily due to a lack of exposure among employers to workers with handicaps.

10. It is also noteworthy that only 41.0% of the participating employers reported that they would be willing to hire the student for whom they were providing a work placement. In some cases, this was due to the fact that they had created a "special job" for the student but, most frequently, their unwillingness was due to the additional training and extra supervisory time that would be required.

11. Conclusion 9 and 10 above point to one of the crucial but unresolved issues pertaining to the effectiveness of this program. Although the job placements were successful with respect to the enhancement of employability among the students, it is uncertain whether they actually increased the probability that the students will be employed following their completion of secondary school without additional supportive programming.

    A follow-up evaluation will be required to generate information relevant to this issue. If these students are unable to secure employment there was concern expressed among a few participants that the program might do more harm than good by raising the expectations of both the students and the parents and then frustrating these elevated expectations because of an inability or unwillingness by employers to hire the students into permanent

positions.

12. It was also notable that some concerns were expressed about a lack of community awareness about the program - particularly by the employer group. The importance of a high degree of community awareness is relevant to two important issues.

a) Given the time commitment required of the employers and the apparent lack of any direct advantage to participating in the program, a strong degree of community awareness could provide some public relations benefits to this key group.

b) Given the concerns about employers being unwilling to hire the handicapped because of a lack of exposure to handicapped workers, publicity arising from this program could serve to expose potential employers to the capabilities of the handicapped population.

It should be emphasized that project staff did make a concerted effort to promote the program within the community but the results of these activities did not appear to meet the expectations of a number of important participants.

13. The portability analysis which was carried out as a component of this evaluation suggested that this program could be implemented in other communities across the country.

PART 7: RECOMMENDATIONS

7.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Given the reported uncertainties concerning the future employability of the students and the possibility of raising "false expectations" in the students and parents, it is important that these concerns be studied further. It is therefore recommended that a two year follow-up evaluation be conducted with each student following their completion of school, for the purposes of
   1) recording the subsequent employment experiences of all of the students involved in the program and
   2) testing the possibility that the raising of "false expectations" concerning employment among students and parents may be a negative consequence of this type of programming.

2. To a very considerable extent, the future employability of these students will be based upon the willingness of employers to hire handicapped workers. In the opinion of most of the study participants, the current unwillingness is due to a lack of exposure among employers to the capabilities of handicapped workers. At the same time, it must be recognized that disabled students require extensive employment experiences while in school, to develop both the job-related and social skills which form the basis of enhanced employability. The development of these skills, in turn, require a significant time investment by both the employer and support staff from this program.

   It is therefore recommended that additional priority be given to familiarizing employers with the employment capabilities of disabled persons and the need to help disabled students to develop job skills through meaningful work experience programs.

   In implementing such programs, it is important that adequate support be provided to the employers which recognizes the significant investment in supervisory time which is required.

3. A number of community agencies in Hamilton-Wentworth are involved in the provision of employment support to the disabled. The results of this evaluation suggest that positive impacts can result from these initiatives and it is recognized that many of the students involved in the Operation Employability program will be involved with these agencies following graduation. These services will therefore play a key role with respect to the future employability of these students.

   It is therefore recommended that these service providers be encouraged to further develop their employment support programs and that resources be made available to ensure an adequate evaluation of the services which they offer.

4. The results of this evaluation suggested that the students' level of satisfaction with the program was a function of their own career interests. Students who reported career interests were more likely to report satisfaction than students who were unable to express career plans or interests.

   It is therefore recommended that Job Coaches, teachers and parents be encouraged to work with students to help them to develop realistic vocational aspirations designed to enhance their work satisfaction.